
Gender Roles: “Shrek”

Gender roles are the set of social norms that dictate different behaviors generally considered by people as appropriate, acceptable, or desirable based on the actual or perception of sexuality. The notion of gender roles is far exhibited by the presence of masculinity and femininity in society (Lindsey and Christy 10). Some of the gender roles' traits are similar across several cultures. It is perceived that gender roles are also dictated by the biological aspects. The World Health Organization defines gender roles as “The socially constructed roles, behaviors, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women.” Nonetheless, Gender roles have been staged in literature and films as well. “Shrek” is an animated film that exhibits gender representation through its characters who show shifted gender roles.

About and Plot Summary of the Film

The film “Shrek” is an American animated fantasy movie written by Ted Elliot, Terry Rossio, Roger Schulman, and Joe Stillman released on April 22, 2001. The film involves both human and animal characters and can be viewed by both adult and children (Elliot, Stillman, Schulman, and Rossio). Shrek is a green ogre whose swamp has been dumped with every type of fairytale creatures done by Lord Farquaad who has an aim of becoming a king. Shrek moves out with noisy Donkey in a quest to persuade Lord Farquaad to reinstate the swamp to Shrek. For Farquaad to grant Shrek his request, they make a deal to first rescue lovely Princess Fiona. Princess Fiona is to be married by Prince Charming who is in a tower guarded by Dragon who is breathing fire. On returning with Princess, the ugly ogre falls in love with her despite her having hidden secret.

Gender Roles

Characters in the “Shrek” are used to exhibit the notion of gender roles. For instance, Shrek is given character traits of masculinity in his way of living. He stays alone in a swamp where he uses his earwax to make a candle. He is used to doing all the hard works like rescuing Princess Fiona. His behavior is not appealing to the society simply because he is a male who is exercising the masculine characteristics like pride. Additionally, his pride is huge when demanding back his swamp taken by Lord Farquaad. The characters portrayed by the ogre are generally the one attributed to masculinity in society.

The distance between two genders is an aspect of gender roles in a society (Lindsey and

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Christy 12). This type of non-verbal communication is highly observed in societies in daily activities like the mode of dressing. For instance, in the “Shrek”, Shrek observes a greater distance when meeting with Donkey compared to when he is meeting with Fiona. This trait attributes the masculine characteristics of gender. However, Prince Charming is opposed to such a trait because it is seemingly against the wish of the society.

Males and females have outlined roles to play in daily activities. However, in the “Shrek”, Fiona is seen to have masculine characteristic when she fights her attackers lead by Robin Hood. According to the society, Fiona is not expected to show such traits as a female since fighting is taken in as males’ work. In this way, Fiona breaks the stereotype that: females should not engage in war for it (war) is perceived to be males’ duty and responsibility.

The fear of being rejected in society because of unusual appearance explains the gender representation. In the movie “Shrek”, Fiona is afraid that Shrek will not accept her because she is in a form of an ogre. In the second movie, Fiona aids Shrek to an extent of crying by herself away, an aspect that is used to underline her femininity. The femininity is backed up when she is greatly helping in the building of the relationship between her family and Shrek by inviting each and every person into her feminine conversation.

In conclusion, the film “Shrek” has successfully made a change in the view of gender roles. The masculine and the feminine have shifted from one side to another in an attempt at gaining perfection (Lindsey and Christy 23). The changing has also seen Shrek to sometimes demonstrate feminine characteristics like when he is so emotional that he does not exactly know how to explain his love to Fiona. On the other side, Fiona is at times exhibiting masculine characteristics like pride when responding to Lord Farquaad and fighting Robin Hood. Nonetheless, gender roles may shift from one side to another depending on one’s personality.

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